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RUEHTG/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA 0180  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0314

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN NEW YORK 001133

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2019  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UNGA](#) [XK](#) [XL](#) [XM](#)  
SUBJECT: WESTERN HEMISPHERE DELEGATIONS AT THE 64TH UNGA

REF: A. (A) USUN NEW YORK 997  
[1](#)B. (B) USUN NEW YORK 982  
[1](#)C. (C) USUN NEW YORK 972  
[1](#)D. (D) USUN NEW YORK 878  
[1](#)E. (E) USUN NEW YORK 1070

Classified By: Amb.RosemaryDiCarlo

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: President Obama's speech was the high point of the UNGA's opening session. WHA and other delegations warmly welcomed his call for a "new era of engagement." One of the most striking expressions of this sentiment came later in the session when the Third Committee erupted into applause after the U.S. joined consensus on two WHA delegation resolutions that we had repeatedly voted against in the past. The constitutional crisis in Honduras was closely followed in New York, but remained a peripheral issue. On the eve of the Copenhagen Conference, climate change was the issue of the day and was of central concern to the Caribbeans. There had been high expectations for a change in U.S. policy on Cuba. While U.S. measures to lift some restrictions were well received, the UNGA approved by the usual overwhelming vote the 18th resolution condemning the Cuban Embargo. The embargo will be among those issues exploited by our critics as the initial goodwill from our new approach to multilateral diplomacy fades. In this regard, however, it was encouraging that close allies abstained on a Cuban resolution against unilateral economic sanctions noting that such measures were admissible to uphold democracy and human rights. Meanwhile, WHA votes helped rack up large margins of victory for the three Third Committee human rights resolutions on Iran, North Korea and Burma. We were less successful in mobilizing WHA support on Middle East issues although the region contributed significantly to opposition to or abstentions on the Organization of the Islamic Conference's (OIC) problematic Defamation of Religions resolution. Members of the

Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) became a more active and more strident voice against U.S. interests on a wide range of issues. Brazil was elected to replace Costa Rica as one of the region's two temporary members on the UN Security Council. Colombia is expected to replace Mexico on the Council next year. END SUMMARY .

2.(U) GENERAL DEBATE: This year, nineteen western hemisphere Presidents and Prime Ministers came to New York to address the opening sessions of the General Assembly -- six less than last year. Brazil by tradition leads off the General Debate. Economics was the heart of President Lula's speech, slamming the failure to regulate financial markets and touting the Brazilian experience in managing their "brief" economic recession. Next President Obama delivered a speech that electrified the General Assembly Hall. The speech was universally well received among WHA delegations and set a strongly positive tone for subsequent USUN initiatives at the GA. Bringing us back down to earth, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, in a folksy talk-show-host style, delivered a hour-long vintage attack on the "empire" while extolling the triumphant progress of his alternative universe, the ALBA alliance. (REF A) (Chavez brings to each UNGA a fresh set of name-droppings, we learned this year that he has been hob-nobbing with the likes of Oliver Stone, Juanes, King Juan Carlos ("we're great friends") and Danny Glover in clogs.) Notably missing from the initial WHA line-up was Honduran President Zelaya already ensconced in the Brazilian Embassy in Tegucigalpa. Most WHA speakers mentioned the coup d'etat

in Honduras and called for the restoration of President Zelaya. Colombia's President Uribe and Panama's Martinelli were not among them.

3.(C) THE YEAR OF HONDURAS: On one of the last days of the General Debate, Honduran Foreign Minister Patricia Rodas stepped in to replace President Zelaya in the General Debate. At the podium, she whipped out her cell phone, and there, in a special verizon moment, live from downtown Tegucigalpa was President Zelaya urging the international community to rally to his cause. Before the 64th Session was even convened, the constitutional crisis in Honduras had been introduced into the General Assembly resulting in a resolution condemning the coup shortly after it occurred. The issue remained a source of contention within the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) in coming months as the ALBA group led by Venezuela maneuvered to further involve the United Nations. At the same time, Zelaya's hosts, the Brazilians, while doing little to resolve the crisis, became increasingly strident about the diplomatic sanctity of their Mission in Tegucigalpa. On October 28, there was further debate on Honduras under the GA agenda item "The Situation in Central America." (REF 972) In that debate, Honduran Permanent Representative Jorge Arturo Reina pointedly thanked the U.S. for its effort to broker a negotiated solution to the standoff in Tegucigalpa. Long friendly to the U.S. Mission despite Honduras's ALBA membership, Reina and his Deputy were extremely helpful in managing the issue in New York. Reina subsequently left New York for Honduras to become Zelaya's appointee on the Verification Commission created to monitor compliance with the Tegucigalpa/San Jose Agreement.

4.(U) CARICOM: With the approach of the Copenhagen Conference, climate change headed the agenda of many delegations at the UNGA but none more consistently than that of members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). As the Chair of the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS), the Perm Rep of Grenada, Dessima Williams, had an important role in articulating that group's joint position at the Conference. Climate change was also a central theme of the group's November 5 meeting with Ambassador Rice. In the absence of Ambassador Williams, Saint Lucia's Perm Rep led the discussion. CARICOM Perm Reps also briefed her on the small arms trafficking problem in the Caribbean. Ambassador Rice pointed out that as part of our effort to engage on a broad range of issues at the United Nations we had agreed to join consensus to begin negotiations on a Small Arms Treaty. The

third item on their agenda was the "Economic Crisis." The Perm Rep of Barbados called for radical reform of the Bretton Woods institutions, i.e. an expanded role for developing countries, a familiar G-77 theme. Finally, the Jamaican briefed the Ambassador on the status of the CARICOM project to create a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery at UN headquarters. A key CARICOM initiative for several years now, the Caribbeans are getting serious about fund raising for the project and are hopefully looking to the USG for a contribution.

5.(U) CUBAN EMBARGO: In the General Assembly's annual consideration of the Cuban resolution condemning the embargo, Ambassador Rice delivered the U.S. statement emphasizing the human rights situation in Cuba and the lack of a Cuban response to our easing certain restrictions. With typical hyperbole, the Cuban Foreign Minister called the embargo

"genocidal." While many countries commended the U.S. for its recent measures, the vote was as usual a landslide in favor of the Cuban resolution: 187-3(US)-2. Equally predictable was the applause that greeted the vote. (REF B) It is noteworthy, however, that another Cuban resolution focused in a more generic fashion on the same issue -- unilateral economic sanctions -- was approved in Second Committee by a much less impressive margin. That resolution condemns such sanctions but as in past years, our closest allies, the EU and others, abstained on it. This year the vote was (108-2(US)-53). In explanation of vote for the EU, Sweden stated that such measures were admissible in fighting terrorism and upholding democracy and human rights. (As in the past, a similar EU statement was also made after the embargo vote.) The voting pattern in Second Committee offers hope for rebuilding the coalition supporting improved human rights practices in Cuba if we can somehow address the extraterritorial aspects of our sanctions regime that our allies find so unpalatable.

6.(U) HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTIONS: WHA votes were again crucial to achieving our goals on human rights in Third Committee. This year there were no "no action" motions to confuse things in Committee consideration of the specific country human rights resolutions on Iran, Burma and North Korea. There were eleven WHA delegations that voted for all three resolutions; fourteen abstained on all three (11 Caribbeans, Brazil, Bolivia, and Colombia). Only two voted against all three resolutions: Cuba and Venezuela. Nicaragua voted against the Iran and Burma resolutions but abstained on the North Korea resolution. Ecuador abstained on Burma and North Korea but voted against the Iran resolution. Jamaica and Guyana also split their votes. Jamaica voted for the Burma and North Korea resolutions but abstained on Iran. Guyana voted for the Burma resolution but abstained on the other two. Overall, we marginally improved the region's support on these key votes compared to last year.

17. (SBU) DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS AND ANTI-ISRAELI RESOLUTIONS: Another priority vote was the OIC's Defamation of Religions resolution. Last year only Canada and the U.S. voted against this problematic resolution. This year in Third Committee Chile, Mexico, Panama and Uruguay joined Canada and the U.S. in voting "no." The final tally was 81-55(US)-43 abstentions. Twelve WHA delegations voted for the resolution while fourteen abstained. Three Caribbean delegations absented themselves from the vote. Sentiment is definitely running against this resolution in the Western Hemisphere, and it may well be possible to enlist even more regional support in future. WHA posts' assistance was also requested on short notice for the vote in the GA plenary on the "Goldstone Report" (SECSTATE 112828). We had limited traction in the region. Only two WHA delegations voted with us against the resolution: Canada and Panama. Three abstained Costa Rica, Colombia and Uruguay. In addition, two friendly delegations stayed away from the vote: St. Kitts and Nevis and Honduras. On other anti-Israeli resolutions in support of the Palestinians, we generally held the few WHA votes and abstentions we had in the past. Notably, the Panamanians have been considerably more active in voting with

us on these resolutions. The Israeli Resolution on Agricultural Technology in Development provided a good example of ALBA voting trends. This constructive, innocuous resolution is only the second in history run by the Israeli delegation at the UN. When it was first presented in 2007,

every WHA delegation voted for it except Cuba which was absent for the vote; OIC members abstained. This year all WHA delegations again voted for the Israeli resolution except five; Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Suriname (an OIC member) abstained along with the OIC members. (Ecuador absented itself from the vote.) Concurrently, Venezuela has been using extreme rhetoric in its characterization of Israel, even referring to it as "genocidal." In many cases, they are more extreme than the Palestinians themselves.

18. (SBU) **ROLE OF THE ALBA GROUP:** In general, we have witnessed in New York an increase in the anti-American rhetoric by Venezuela and other ALBA members similar to that reported in CARACAS 1420. At every opportunity, the BRV delegation has attacked the U.S. A recurring theme is the alleged "seven U.S. bases in Colombia." Chavez himself made much of it in the General Debate. In a Third Committee discussion of indigenous rights, the Venezuelan delegate even found negative implications from the "bases" for indigenous peoples. More directly, the Venezuelan Perm Rep sent a detailed presentation to the Security Council and held a press conference on the subject on November 25. President Evo Morales similarly attacked the "U.S. bases" in his General Debate comments. The Nicaraguans have been loyal acolytes in echoing these attacks, and adding a few of their own. In the General Debate, Foreign Minister Santos of Nicaragua embraced the cause of Puerto Rican independence.

19. (SBU) For their part, the Cubans have chimed in on the "bases" theme and they have also stepped up the "fuss" in New York over the "Cuban five." (HAVANA 732) Cuban Vice Minister Rodriguez Parrilla set the tone in his General Debate speech calling for the release of the "five Cuban anti-terrorism" fighters. The Cuban Perm Rep followed through in the debate on terrorism in the Security Council. Here too the Nicaraguans loyally join the chorus. General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto in his farewell address pointed to the "serious threat" from the U.S. bases in Colombia and called for the release of the Cuban "heroes." (REF D) In turn, the core ALBA group seems to be coalescing around more extreme positions in other areas. On Israeli/Palestine issues, as noted above, they have become outspoken critics of Israel. ALBA countries also launched a concerted attempt to sabotage the Legal Empowerment of the Poor resolution in Second Committee, an initiative strongly supported by the U.S. A consensus resolution was finally approved after Brazil and other WHA delegations weighed in to help turn back the hostile ALBA amendments. On the U.S. sponsored Elections Resolution in Third Committee which had over a hundred co-sponsors, ALBA delegations (Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador) voted for Russia's hostile amendment to eliminate mention of guidelines developed by a NGO for election observation -- the ALBA group was five of only nineteen votes for the amendment.

110. (SBU) **GRULAC:** WHA Perm Reps emphasize that the deeply divided GRULAC regional caucus addresses only UN elections. Even with that limited agenda we are told that GRULAC meetings are unhappy assemblies. The Venezuelans and Nicaraguans are constantly stirring up regional discord. That said, Brazil was unanimously backed by the GRULAC in the UNGA vote to replace Costa Rica for one of the region's two temporary seats in the UN Security Council. Next year Colombia is the only declared GRULAC candidate to replace

Mexico for the region's second seat. There was some speculation that Nicaragua might launch a challenge but at this point it appears Colombia will be proposed as the GRULAC consensus candidate. In two other areas, however, the GRULAC was unable to reach consensus. A seat traditionally held by a CARICOM member on the Advisory Committee on Administrative

and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) was contested in Fifth Committee by Jamaica and Haiti. It is unusual for CARICOM to be unable to manage such disputes within the group. The incumbent, Jamaica, won handily. Jamaica is also a candidate for a third term on the Peace Building Commission. Peru, which has never served on the PBC, is running an active campaign to unseat the Jamaicans.

11.(C) SECURITY COUNCIL: Temporary Security Council members Costa Rica and Mexico have worked well with USUN. Both, especially the Costa Ricans, have been active in factoring human rights considerations into UNSC activities. They have both been helpful on major peace and security issues. The Costa Ricans, founding members of the S-5 group of small member states favoring reform of UNSC working methods, admit after serving on the Council that they have a greater appreciation of the constraints on being more inclusive in the decision-making process. When it replaces Costa Rica, Brazil will undoubtedly have a different agenda. It will be looking to use its tenure to strengthen support among the broader UN membership for realizing its long-standing ambition to become a permanent member. At the UNGA, Brazil has significant influence and can exert strong leadership in producing reasonable outcomes. In the recent Second Committee negotiations on the International Financial System and Development resolution, the Brazilians were helpful in beating back hostile ALBA amendments. Similarly, they played a helpful role in reaching consensus on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor resolution. On the other hand, their repeated refusal to support specific country human rights resolutions and to oppose the Defamation of Religions resolution in Third Committee has been disappointing. In the General Assembly, Brazil will more often than not abstain on controversial issues.

12.(C) NOTES ON DELEGATIONS: The recently arrived Ecuadoran Perm Rep, like his predecessor, is a former Foreign Minister, and will, hopefully like her show some independence from the ALBA line. The new Bolivian Charge Pablo Solon Romero is reportedly close to President Morales. He was approachable and encouraging on human rights issues. The Bolivian delegation finally abstained on all three of the specific country resolutions; the best we could expect. Chilean Perm Rep Herald Munoz, long one of the most prominent Latin American diplomats at the UN, will, if elections back home turn out as most pundits predict, be replaced next year. Jorge Urbina of Costa Rica emerges from his experience in the UNSC as a more seasoned statesman and if as expected he is asked to stay on after Costa Rican elections he will be looking for a new role at the UN.

13.(U) SPIRIT OF the 64th: There was a definite change in receptivity for U.S. views in the 64th Session of the UNGA. The President's General Debate speech set the tone, and as he promised was followed by greater willingness by the U.S. delegation to engage with other member states on a variety of issues. For instance, we had long been isolated in voting against the Right to Food, a Cuban resolution, and the Rights of the Child Resolution, with which Uruguay has always been

closely associated. At two different sessions, when the U.S. joined consensus on these resolutions, the Third Committee erupted into spontaneous applause. In other committees, there were similar dramatic changes in the U.S. approach.  
(REF E)

14.(C) COMMENT: Despite the increasingly confrontational approach of ALBA members, the WHA regional group has responded well to U.S. initiatives. The coalition of WHA member states on human rights seems more consolidated, and we were even able to elicit some stray abstention votes from the ALBA group. WHA delegations warmly welcomed the U.S. approach of engaging on many issues on which it had previously been isolated. Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua have aligned themselves with the most radical states in the UN. The three of them have become among the most vociferous anti-American delegations in the organization. Bolivia and Ecuador are taking many radical positions, but are still not in lock-step

with the other three. As good will from our new approach to multilateral diplomacy fades, the Cuban embargo will be one of those issues exploited by our critics. Meanwhile, next year in the UNSC, Brazil will at times likely be a difficult partner.

RICE